THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
MARVEL COMICS
Fantastic Four
NOV. '96 1
Fantastic Four
JIM LEE
BRANDON CHOI
SCOTT WILLIAMS
0 74808 02462 9 11
$3.95 AUS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

THE DREAM'S ALWAYS THE SAME.
IT BEGINS WITH A PERFECT LAUNCH.
YOU'RE LOOKING GOOD, EXCELSIOR!
BUT THIS TIME IT TAKES A FANTASTIC TWIST.
SUZIE AND JOHNNY?/ WHAT'RE THEY DOING HERE?
YOU DID IT, BEN!/
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS --
VREEP VREEP VREEP
THAT'S WHEN THE WARNING INDICATORS START LIGHTING UP LIKE A CHRISTMAS TREE!
RADIATION'S FLOODING INTO THE MAIN COMPARTMENT.
OUTTA NOWHERE, REED POPS INTO THE SCENE AND TRIES TO SALVAGE THE SITUATION, BUT EVEN HE RUNS OUT OF ANSWERS.
BEN/ YOU'VE GOT TO GET US BACK TO EARTH/
BUT BEFORE I GET A CHANCE TO DO ANYTHING, JOHNNY BURSTS INTO FLAMES BEFORE MY VERY EYES/
MY FRIENDS/ MY SHIP/
THEY'RE ALL DYING --
BRREEP BRREEP BRREEP
-- WHEN THERE'S SUDDENLY --
-- A PHONE CALL FOR ME?
MAJOR GRIMM? DO YOU COPY?
HELLO, BEN?

NO. NOT A PHONE.
IT'S THE INTERCOM.
YOU CAN GET UP NOW, MAJOR GRIMM.
WE'VE COMPLETED THE SIMULATION.
Huh?! Oh... RIGHT!
I TOLD YOU GUYS THAT I COULD DO THIS WITH MY EYES CLOSED.
SOMETIMES I REALLY DO QUESTION MAJOR GRIMM'S ATTITUDE.
THIS WASN'T HOW WE DID IT IN THE OLD DAYS, REED.
IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT HE NEVER ADVANCED BEYOND BEING A TEST PILOT.
TRUST ME, ISAAC. BEN GRIMM IS ONE OF THE FINEST AVIATORS THIS COUNTRY HAS EVER PRODUCED.
AS A BOY, ALL HE EVER DREAMED ABOUT WAS BECOMING AN ASTRONAUT. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS MAY BE AS CLOSE AS HE'LL EVER GET.
IF HE HADN'T BEEN WOUNDED DURING THE GULF WAR, HE MIGHT VERY WELL HAVE BEEN COMMANDER OF THE EXCELSIOR ON THIS MISSION.

KA CHANG
ANOTHER FLAWLESS PERFORMANCE, BEN. AT LEAST ISAAC CAN NEVER COMPLAIN ABOUT THAT.
COMPARED TO FLYING COMBAT SORTIES, REED, THIS STUFF IS JUST A WALK IN THE PARK.
SO WHAT'S THE LATEST WORD ON THE MISSION?
WASHINGTON SAYS IT'S STILL A "GO."
"GUESS THAT MEANS WE'RE DONE WITH THESE TESTS ON THE PROTOTYPE?"
"YES. AS SOON AS ISAAC TRANSFERS THE SIMULATION DATA OVER TO THE EXCELSIOR, WE'LL BE READY TO LAUNCH.
"I FEEL AS THOUGH WE'RE STANDING AT THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW ERA IN SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY."

FANTASTIC FOUR® Vol. 2, No. 1, November, 1996. (ISSN #0274-5291) Published by MARVEL COMICS, Gerard Calabrese, President. Stan Lee, Publisher. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, NY AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published monthly. Copyright © 1996 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. Price $1.99 per copy in the U.S. and $2.75 in Canada. Subscription rate for 12 issues: U.S. $23.88; foreign $35.88; and Canadian subscribers must add $10.00 for postage and GST. GST #R127032852. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. FANTASTIC FOUR (including all prominent characters featured in the issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) is a trademark of MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE FANTASTIC FOUR, c/o MARVEL DIRECT MARKETING CORP./SUBSCRIPTION DEPT. P.O. BOX 1979, DANBURY, CT. 06813-1979. TELEPHONE # (203) 743-5331. Printed in Canada.

IF ANYONE'S GONNA GET US THERE, IT'LL BE YOU, OLD BUDDY.
I APPRECIATE THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, BEN. BUT DO ME A PERSONAL FAVOR?
DO TRY AND STAY AWAKE FOR THE REMAINING SIMULATION EXERCISES, OKAY?

Stan Lee presents:
THE REBIRTH OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
RENAISSANCE
JIM LEE PLOT & PENCILS BRANDON CHOI SCRIPT
IF YOU PROMISE TO TAKE ME WITH YOU ON THE EXCELSIOR.
YOU REALLY OUTDID YOURSELF THIS TIME, REED.
SHE REPRESENTS THE NEXT GENERATION OF SPACE-CRAFT, BEN.
WITH MY NEW QUANTUM DRIVE POWERING THE PROPULSION AND SHIELDING SYSTEMS, THE HUMAN RACE WILL FINALLY BE ABLE TO EXPLORE THE WONDERS OF THE UNIVERSE BEYOND OUR OWN SOLAR SYSTEM.
TAKING THE EXCELSIOR UP TO STUDY THE APPROACHING SPACE ANOMALY WILL BE AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP IN PROVING THE SHIP'S CAPABILITIES.
AND IF IT WERE UP TO ME, OLD FRIEND, YOU'D BE THE MAN SITTING IN THE PILOT'S SEAT.
EXCUSE ME, Dr. RICHARDS, BUT I HAVE THE ASTRO-NAVIGATION CHARTS YOU REQUESTED.
SCOTT WILLIAMS INKS
JOE CHIODO &
MARTIN JIMENEZ COLORS
WILDSTORM FX COMPUTER COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS &
COMICRAFT'S DAVE LANPHEAR LETTERS
MIKE HEISLER &
JONATHAN PETERSON EDITORS
BOB HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF
YES, I...I'LL BE RIGHT WITH YOU.
AND HERE ARE THE PERFORMANCE SPECS FOR THE PROPULSION UNITS.
I'M OUTTA HERE, EINSTEIN.
HEY, DARLIN'! HOW'S LIFE IN THE CORPORATE BOARDROOM?
RUTHLESS AS EVER, BEN. IS REED WITH YOU?
YOUR ROMEO'S OFF DOIN' HIS Mr. SCIENCE SHTICK.
TO WHAT DO WE OWE THE PLEASURE OF THIS CALL, SUZIE-Q?
WHAT'S UP, RICHIE?
YA LOOK A LITTLE TENSE.
PHONE CALL FOR Dr. RICHARDS.
IT'S Ms. STORM HERSELF, CALLING FROM NEW YORK!
HERE, LET ME TAKE CARE OF THAT.

BENJAMIN J. GRIMM, YOU'RE THE ONLY MAN IN THE WORLD WHO COULD CALL ME THAT AND LIVE.
YOU KNOW ME, SUZIE. I LIKE LIVIN' ON THE EDGE.
BESIDES, IT SOUNDS BETTER THAN CALLIN' YOU "BOSS". SO WHAT'S UP?
I JUST WANTED TO TELL REED THAT I'M FLYING OUT WEST TO CENTRAL CITY TODAY.
A LITTLE ROMANTIC SURPRISE FOR LOVER BOY?
ACTUALLY, JOHNNY AND I WILL BE ARRIVING AT VANDEMEER THIS EVENING TO INPUT THE FINAL LAUNCH CODES FOR CONTACT ONE.
YOU GOT JOHNNY TO LEAVE VEGAS TO COME OUT TO THE BOONIES? HOW DID YA PULL THAT OFF?
SIMPLE. HE WANTS A PIECE OF THE EXCELSIOR TO USE AS A P.R. GIMMICK FOR STORM CASINOS. HE THINKS IT'LL BE A BIG TOURIST MAGNET WHEN THE STORY FINALLY GOES PUBLIC.
BEN... IS THERE ANY WAY I CAN TALK TO REED? I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT HE REMEMBERS TO PICK ME UP AT THE AIRPORT.
DON'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YA.
HERE, TAKE A LISTEN FOR YERSELF.
THESE RESULTS ARE INTRIGUING, LARRY. LET'S RUN A QUANTUM PHASE COMPARISON TO ANALYZE THE SUBATOMIC PARTICLE DISTRIBUTION OF THE
SIGH
I GUESS THAT MEANS I'LL BE TAKING A LIMO OUT TO VANDEMEER.
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT. I'LL PICK YOU UP AT THE AIRPORT.
YOU'RE TOO GOOD TO ME, BEN.
DON'T I KNOW IT!
KNOK KNOK
STORM FOUNDATION
Oops, I HAVE TO GO. SEE YOU LATER. AND DON'T BE LATE.
AM I EVER?!

I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, SUSAN, BUT THERE'S SOMEONE I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET.
THIS IS SPECIAL AGENT WYATT WINGFOOT.
HE'S NOW IN CHARGE OF THE EXCELSIOR PROJECT.
WHAT?! BUT WE PROMISED REED --
WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT, UNCLE MATTHEW?
THERE'S BEEN... A CHANGE IN PLANS, SUSAN.
AND WHO AUTHORIZED IT?
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, MS. STORM.
AT 0800 HOURS, THE WHITE HOUSE WAS INFORMED BY THE NATIONAL SPACE AGENCY OF AN UNUSUAL ENERGY FLUCTUATION WITHIN THE STELLAR ANOMALY.
AS A RESULT, IT HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED AS A THREAT TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF THIS COUNTRY AND MUST BE DEALT WITH ACCORDINGLY.
TO THAT END, THE EXCELSIOR PROJECT IS NOW UNDER MY CONTROL. ITS NEW CODE-NAME WILL BE CONTACT ONE.
LET'S CUT TO THE CHASE. WHAT EXACTLY DOES ALL THAT MEAN, AGENT WINGFOOT?
MY MEN AND I WILL BE TRAVELING WITH YOU TO VANDEMEER TO TAKE CUSTODY OF THE SPACECRAFT.
DO EITHER MY FATHER OR BROTHER KNOW ABOUT THIS?
NOT YET. BUT IT WOULDN'T REALLY MATTER ANYWAY, MS. STORM.

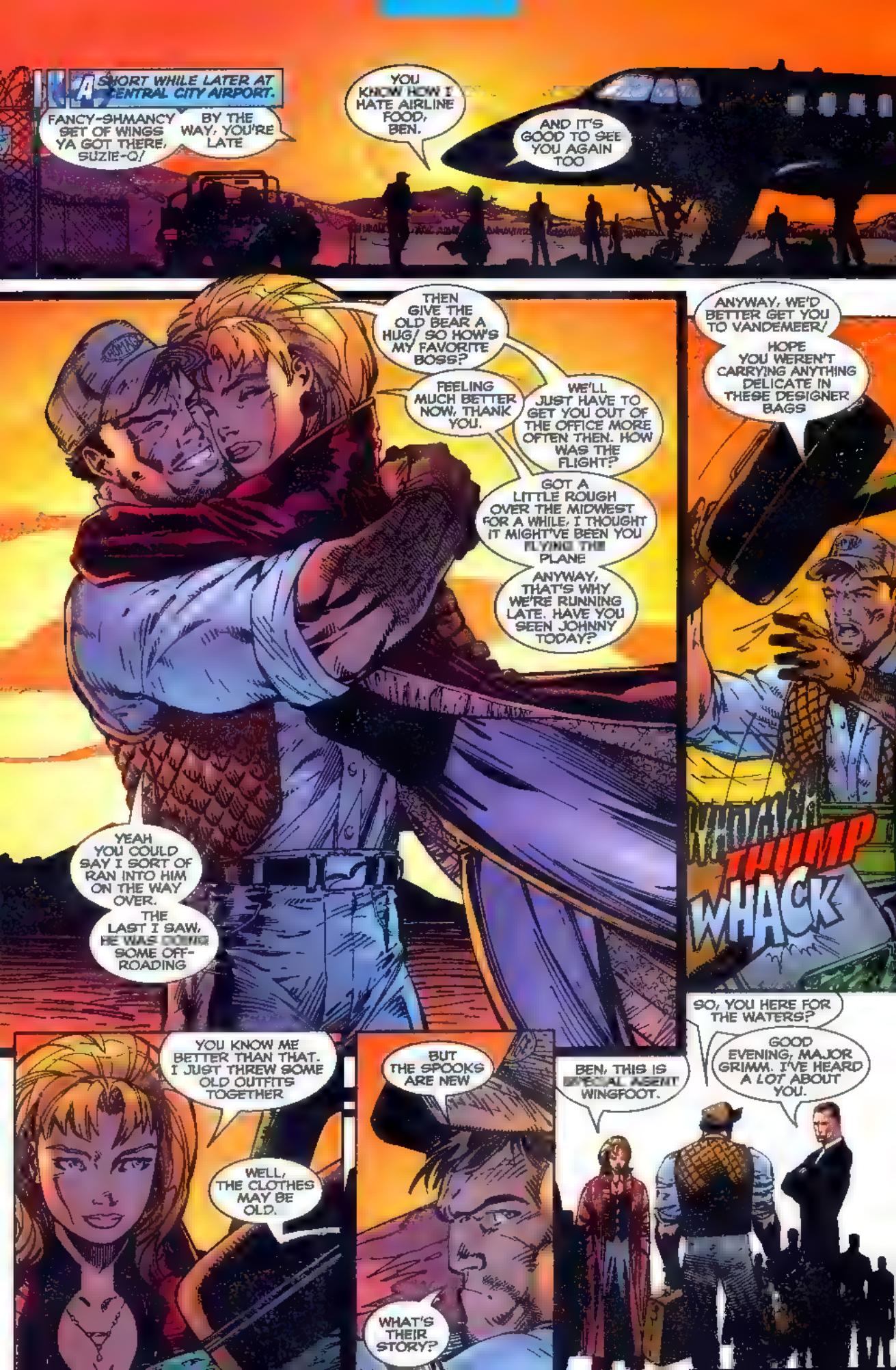
ELSEWHERE.
GOOD EVENING. THIS IS COLLEEN CHANG REPORTING FOR AMERICAN TABLOID FROM THE AREA KNOWN ONLY AS SECTOR 52 LOCATED OUTSIDE OF CENTRAL CITY.
FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, STORIES HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING AMONGST THE LOCALS THAT THIS PLACE IS A MAJOR FOCAL POINT OF UFO ACTIVITY, ALLEGEDLY TIED TO A SECRET MILITARY BASE HIDDEN SOMEWHERE WITHIN THIS MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN.
IN FACT, MANY CONSPIRACY THEORISTS ARE CONVINCED THAT A CLANDESTINE GOVERNMENT AGENCY IS, IN FACT, PREPARING TO MAKE CONTACT WITH ALIEN LIFE.
IRONICALLY, THEIR CLAIMS HAPPEN TO COINCIDE WITH THE RECENT NEWS OF A STELLAR ANOMALY DISCOVERED BY ASTRONOMERS JUST OUTSIDE OF OUR OWN SOLAR SYSTEM --
THE MEDIA HAS NO IDEA WHAT IT'S TALKING ABOUT!
HOW CAN YOU LISTEN TO THAT HOGWASH, REED?
DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE FREE PRESS, ISAAC.
KLIK
MOST OF WHAT SHE REPORTED WASN'T SO FAR FROM THE TRUTH. THE ONLY THING SHE DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT WERE THE SUB-ATOMIC PARTICLE EMISSIONS WE'VE BEEN TRACKING FROM THE ANOMALY.
I'M BEGINNING TO SUSPECT THAT THIS STELLAR MANIFESTATION COULD IN FACT BE AN EMERGING SUB-SPACE WORMHOLE AND THUS THE CONDUIT FOR THE PARTICLES.
WHICH MAKES ME WONDER, WHY ARE WE KEEPING ALL OF THIS A SECRET?
AND HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE PARTICLES' DISTINCT AND REGULAR PATTERN?
COULD THIS BE SOME SORT OF MESSAGE FROM ANOTHER QUADRANT OF SPACE?
THIS MAY BE OUR FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE CONTACT WITH ALIEN LIFE.
THAT'S WHAT THIS PROJECT IS ALL ABOUT, ISAAC, AND WHY I AGREED TO WORK FOR THE STORM FOUNDATION IN THE FIRST PLACE.
SUSAN STORM PUT HER FAITH IN ME AND MY RESEARCH. I DON'T INTEND TO LET HER DOWN.
LOOK REED, I BELIEVE IN YOU.
IT'S MAJOR GRIMM I'M WORRIED ABOUT.

"DON'T WORRY, ISAAC. BEN'S GOT THE RIGHT STUFF."
THIS IS JUST GREAT!
THE GOVERNMENT BUILDS A BILLION DOLLAR SPACESHIP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DESERT BUT DOESN'T BOTHER TO PAVE A LOUSY ROAD TO GET TO IT!
BRRRMM
Huh?! WHAT THE --?!
VRMMM
WHO'D BE CRAZY ENOUGH TO DRIVE A DIABLO OUT HERE?!
HEY! WATCH OUT, YOU IDIOT!
BEEP BEEP
VRMM
YOU TIRED OF LIVIN', BUDDY?!
OR JUST YOUR $250,000 CAR?
HONK HONK
VRMMM
HEY THERE, HANDSOME!
IT SEEMS I'M A LITTLE LOST.
INTERESTED IN HELPING ME FIND MY WAY?
SWEET AUNT PETUNIA!
IT'D BE MY PLEASURE!

HA!HA!
DREAM ON, OLD MAN!
YOU'D NEVER BE ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH TIFFANY!
SHE LIKES HER MEN YOUNG AND HER CARS FAST!
JOHNNY STORM! I SHOULDA KNOWN IT WAS YOU!
ALWAYS THE BOY PLAYING WITH A MAN'S TOY!
WHEN I GET MY HANDS ON YOU --
REALITY CHECK, WAR HERO.
YOU'D HAVE TO CATCH ME FIRST...
"...AND THAT AIN'T GONNA HAPPEN!"
COUGH! COUGH!
CRAZY KID'S GONNA GET THEM BOTH KILLED!
I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE THAT HOTHEAD IS SUZIE'S LITTLE BROTHER.
SKREECH
?
NOW WHAT'S HE DOING?
"THE IDIOT'S PLAYING CHICKEN WITH ME?
"HE CAN'T BE THAT STUPID!"
VRR
MM

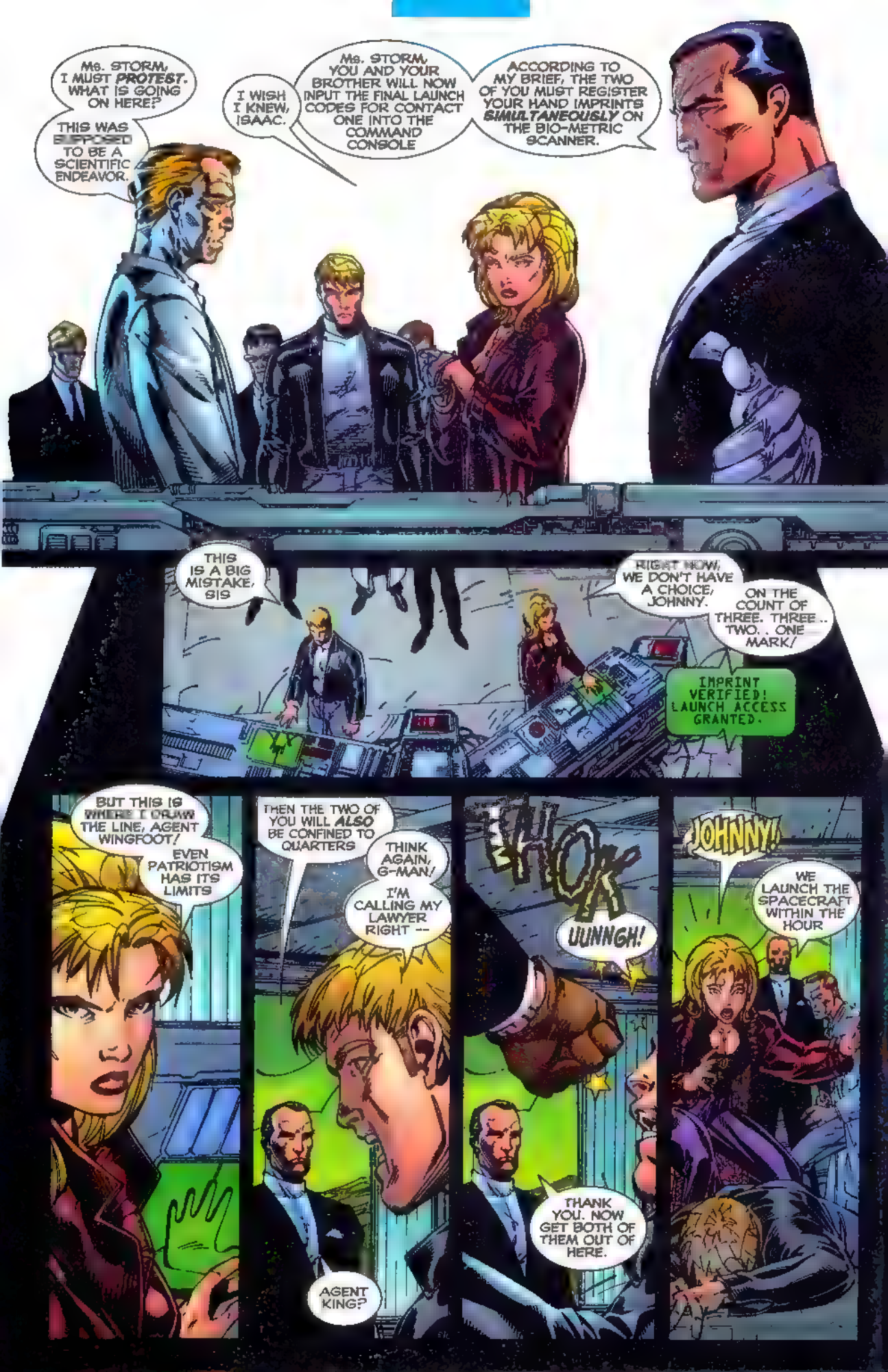
I OUGHTTA KNOW BETTER THAN TO LET HIM GET ME ALL RILED UP LIKE THIS!
RRMM
VRMM
THE HECK WITH IT!
IF HE'S GONNA TALK THE TALK...
...THEN IT'S TIME TO WALK THE WALK!
RRRMM
VRMMMMM
MOMENT OF TRUTH, GRIMM!
LET'S SEE IF THE HERO'S STILL GOT IT!
YOU'RE BOTH CRAZY!
STOP THE CAR!
"LET ME OUT OF HERE!"
RRRRMMMM
VRMMMMM

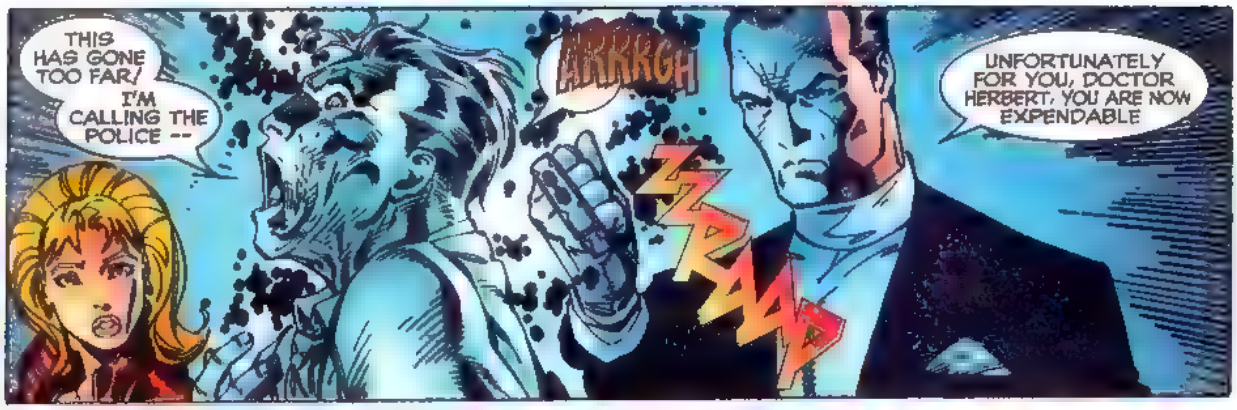
YOU'RE GOING TO GET US KILLED!
WATCH IT, TIFFANY!
DON'T TOUCH THE WHEE --
VRRSSH
HE -- HE CHOKED!
SON OF A --!
WHMP
KRAKOOM
BRRRMM
WHEW!
TALK ABOUT YOUR CRASH AND BURN!
MOMALL
THERE! I CAN SEE 'EM NOW! LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE BOTH ALL RIGHT
AT LEAST UNTIL SHE GETS HER HANDS ON JOHNNY
YOU ARE SUCH A JERK!
I'M WALKING BACK TO TOWN! DO YOU HEAR ME?! WALKING!
FINE! WHATEVER!
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO LIVE THIS DOWN
YOU EGOTISTICAL --
ARE YOU STILL HERE?


A SHORT WHILE LATER AT CENTRAL CITY AIRPORT.
FANCY-SHMANCY SET OF WINGS YA GOT THERE, SUZIE-Q/
BY THE WAY, YOU'RE LATE
YOU KNOW HOW I HATE AIRLINE FOOD, BEN.
AND IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN TOO
THEN GIVE THE OLD BEAR A HUG/ SO HOW'S MY FAVORITE BOSS?
FEELING MUCH BETTER NOW, THANK YOU.
WE'LL JUST HAVE TO GET YOU OUT OF THE OFFICE MORE OFTEN THEN. HOW WAS THE FLIGHT?
GOT A LITTLE ROUGH OVER THE MIDWEST FOR A WHILE, I THOUGHT IT MIGHT'VE BEEN YOU FLYING THE PLANE
ANYWAY, THAT'S WHY WE'RE RUNNING LATE. HAVE YOU SEEN JOHNNY TODAY?
YEAH YOU COULD SAY I SORT OF RAN INTO HIM ON THE WAY OVER.
THE LAST I SAW, HE WAS DOING SOME OFF-ROADING
ANYWAY, WE'D BETTER GET YOU TO VANDEMEER/
HOPE YOU WEREN'T CARRYING ANYTHING DELICATE IN THESE DESIGNER BAGS
THUMP
WHACK
YOU KNOW ME BETTER THAN THAT. I JUST THREW SOME OLD OUTFITS TOGETHER
WELL, THE CLOTHES MAY BE OLD.
BUT THE SPOOKS ARE NEW
WHAT'S THEIR STORY?
BEN, THIS IS SPECIAL AGENT WINGFOOT.
SO, YOU HERE FOR THE WATERS?
GOOD EVENING, MAJOR GRIMM. I'VE HEARD A *LOT* ABOUT YOU.

"SO HAS MY AUNT PETUNIA, BUT SHE STILL LOVES ME ANYWAY."
THE SHIP IS IMPRESSIVE INDEED.
MY MEN LOOK FORWARD TO LAUNCHING CONTACT ONE.
YOUR MEN? IS THIS SOME KINDA JOKE?
WHEN REED FINDS OUT ABOUT THIS, HE'S GONNA CLOBBER YOU UPSIDE YOUR HEAD!
WHAT? WASHINGTON IS TAKING ME OFF THE PROJECT?!
THEY CAN'T DO THIS!
THIS IS BULL! I SHOULD'VE BEEN NOTIFIED ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THIS!
ARE YOU SURE THE MESSAGE IS AUTHENTIC, DOCTOR HERBERT?
IT CAME DIRECTLY FROM STORM FOUNDATION HEADQUARTERS AND WAS SIGNED BY YOUR UNCLE MATTHEW.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE. SUE IS IN CHARGE OF THE AEROSPACE DIVISION.
THERE'S NO WAY SHE'D DO THIS TO REED.
WHO ELSE WOULD HAVE THE AUTHORITY?
BZZZT
THAT WOULD BE ME, DOCTOR RICHARDS

BEN! SUE! WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO ARE THESE MEN?
I AM SPECIAL AGENT WINGFOOT OF S.H.I.E.L.D
I'M HERE TO TAKE OVER THE OPERATIONS OF CONTACT ONE BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
S.H.I.E.L.D.? WHAT'RE YOU GUYS, THE C.I.A.'S FARM TEAM?
WORSE, BEN. THEY'RE A DEEP COVER BLACK OPS AGENCY
WHO WE ARE IS IRRELEVANT. THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS NOW IS THAT ALL OF YOU ARE UNDER MY JURISDICTION
THE WHITE HOUSE HAS DECLARED THE STELLAR ANOMALY A THREAT TO THIS NATION AND I AM HERE TO DEAL WITH IT ACCORDINGLY
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THERE'S BEEN NO INDICATION THAT IT POSES ANY SORT OF DANGER TO US. IN FACT, I BELIEVE --
BUT I DON'T CARE
YOUR OPINION IS NOW IRRELEVANT, DOCTOR RICHARDS
OH YEAH?
WELL, I THINK IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!
SO WHY DON'T WE JUST STEP OUTSIDE AND --
BEN! PLEASE! VIOLENCE WON'T SOLVE ANYTHING!
BUT REED --
NOT NOW, OLD FRIEND!
I SEE THAT THE TWO OF YOU POSE A RISK TO MY OPERATION. TAKE THEM AWAY AND LOCK THEM UP!
REED, I-I'M SORRY!


Ms. STORM, I MUST PROTEST. WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?
THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SCIENTIFIC ENDEAVOR.
I WISH I KNEW, ISAAC.
Ms. STORM, YOU AND YOUR BROTHER WILL NOW INPUT THE FINAL LAUNCH CODES FOR CONTACT ONE INTO THE COMMAND CONSOLE
ACCORDING TO MY BRIEF, THE TWO OF YOU MUST REGISTER YOUR HAND IMPRINTS SIMULTANEOUSLY ON THE BIO-METRIC SCANNER.
THIS IS A BIG MISTAKE, SIS
RIGHT NOW, WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE, JOHNNY.
ON THE COUNT OF THREE. THREE.. TWO.. ONE MARK!
IMPRINT VERIFIED! LAUNCH ACCESS GRANTED.
BUT THIS IS WHERE I DRAW THE LINE, AGENT WINGFOOT!
EVEN PATRIOTISM HAS ITS LIMITS
THEN THE TWO OF YOU WILL ALSO BE CONFINED TO QUARTERS
THINK AGAIN, G-MAN!
I'M CALLING MY LAWYER RIGHT --
AGENT KING?
THOK
UUNNGH!
THANK YOU. NOW GET BOTH OF THEM OUT OF HERE.
JOHNNY!
WE LAUNCH THE SPACECRAFT WITHIN THE HOUR


THIS HAS GONE TOO FAR! I'M CALLING THE POLICE --
ARRRGH
ZZRAAP
UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, DOCTOR HERBERT, YOU ARE NOW EXPENDABLE

YOU -- MURDERER!
CONSIDER YOURSELF FORTUNATE, Ms. STORM. MY ORDERS ARE TO KEEP YOU AND THE OTHERS ALIVE. FOR NOW.
WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?
SIMPLY STATED, WE INTEND TO USE YOUR CREATION TO DESTROY THE HARBINGER BEFORE HE REACHES THIS PLANET.
NOW LOCK UP Ms. STORM AND HER BROTHER!
SECURED SATCOM-LINE IS NOW OPEN.

I TRUST EVERYTHING IS PROCEEDING AS PLANNED?
YES PHASE ONE IS NOW COMPLETE.
YOUR COUNTERFEIT CREDENTIALS WORKED PERFECTLY
OF COURSE, THEY DID.

I AM NOT A MAN WHO TOLERATES MISTAKES!
BUT YOUR TIME GROWS SHORT. MY SENSORS INDICATE THAT THE ANOMALY HAS NEARLY ARRIVED!

THE MISSILES AND SCANNERS ARE BEING LOADED ABOARD THE SPACECRAFT AS WE SPEAK!
NOTHING CAN STOP US NOW!
WE WILL NOT FAIL, VICTOR VON DOOM!

ETENTION BLOCK A
LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE JUST *FINISHED* FUELING THE COOLANT FOR THE QUANTUM DRIVE. GUESS THEY REALLY ARE TAKING HER UP.
WHO THE HELL ARE THESE GUYS? HOW DO THEY KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT THE SHIP?
AND WHAT THE HECK DO THEY WANT HER FOR?
...
I HOPE I'M NOT *BORING* YOU REED
QUITE THE CONTRARY, BEN
I'VE BEEN ASKING MYSELF THOSE VERY SAME QUESTIONS

COME UP WITH ANY ANSWERS?
NO. JUST SPECULATION AT BEST, MY FRIEND

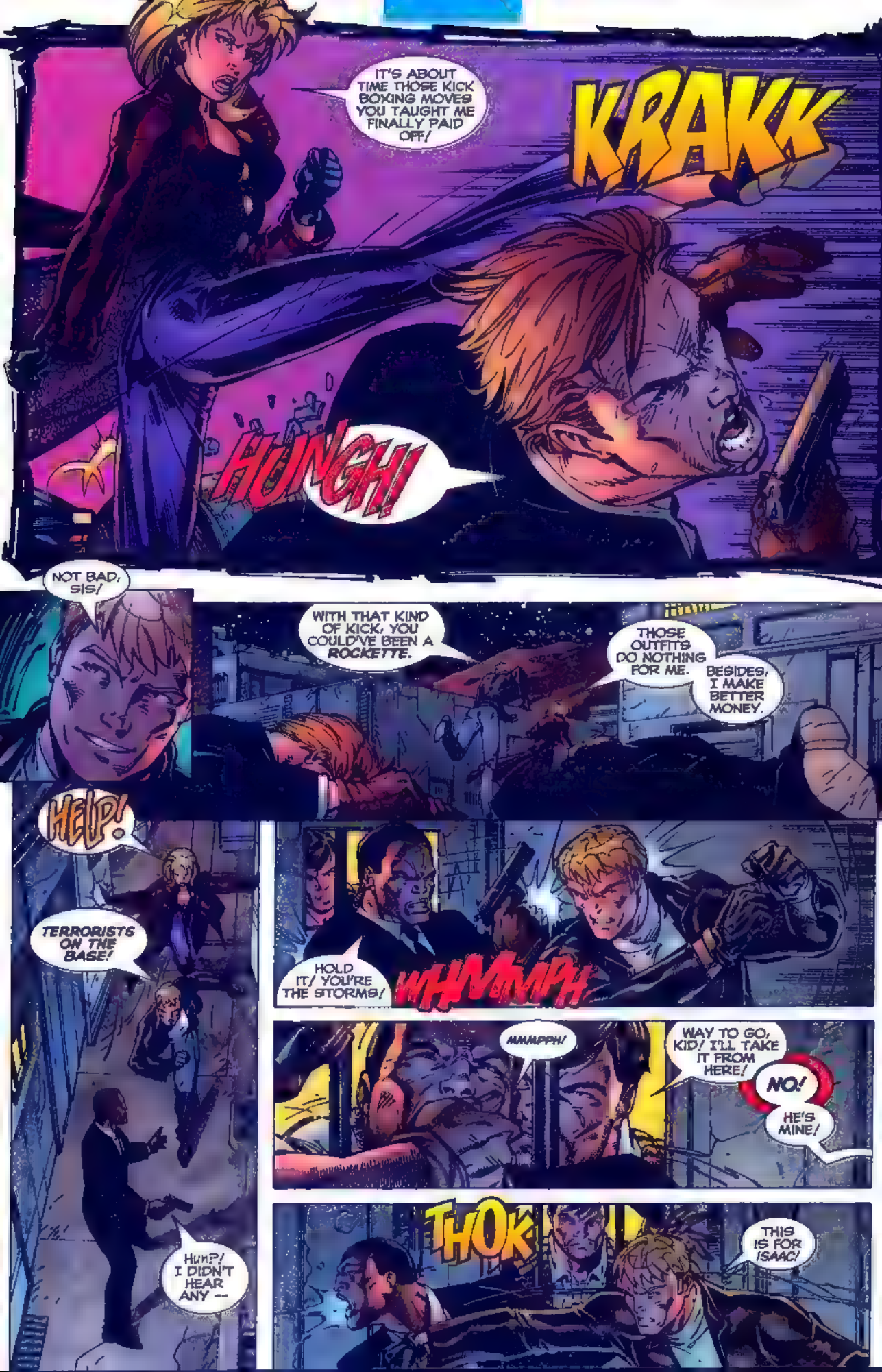
THEN HERE'S A MAJOR CLUE FOR YA, BUDDY!
THOSE GUYS ARE LOADING A *NUKE* ONTO THE SHIP!

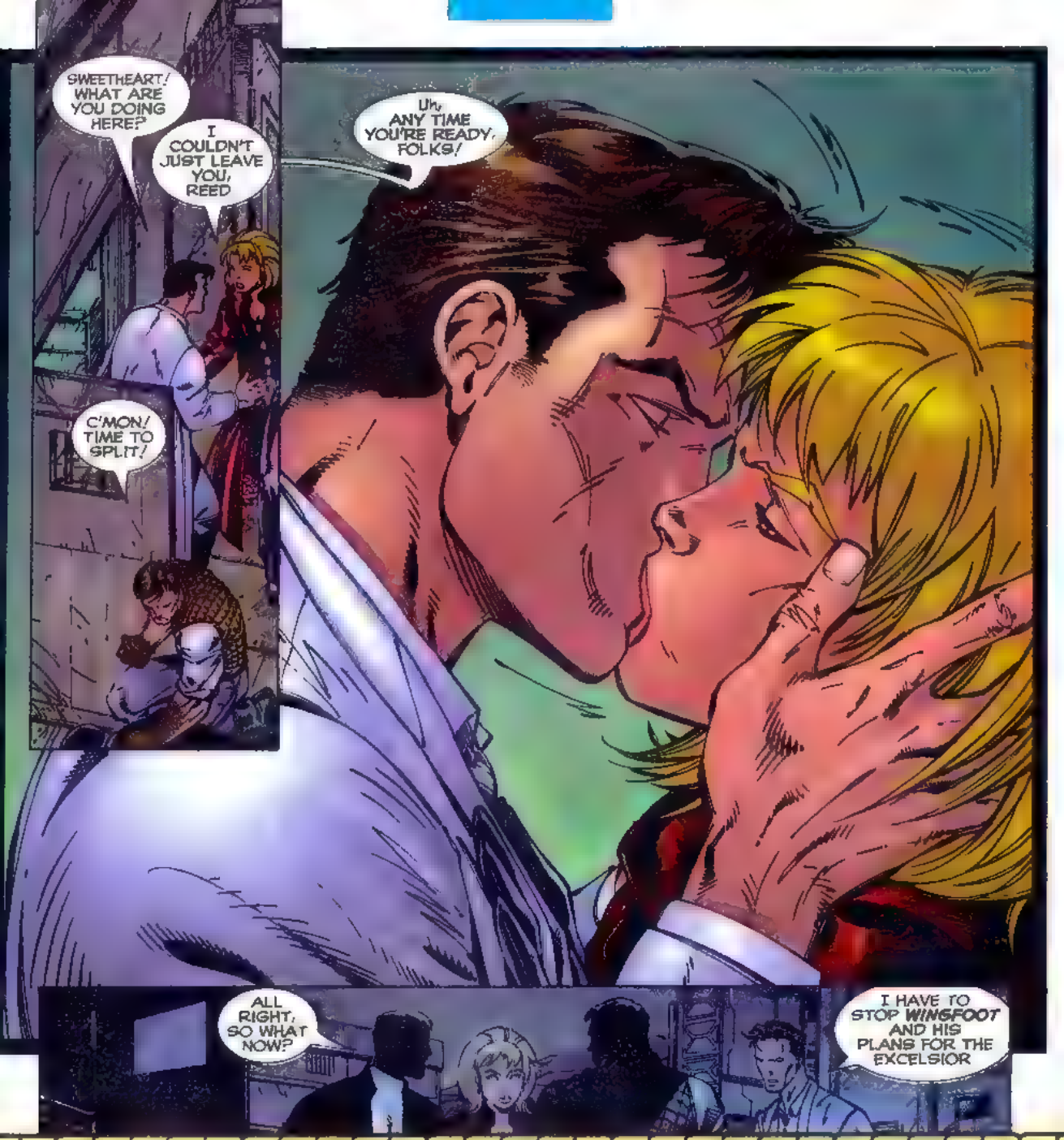
WHAT'RE THEY GONNA DO? BLOW HER UP?
NO. IF THAT WAS THEIR INTENTION, WHY EVEN BOTHER PREPPING IT FOR LAUNCH?
I BELIEVE THIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE STELLAR ANOMALY.
DESTROY *IT*? BUT WHY?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT IT WOULD BE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE
THERE'S STILL SO MUCH WE DON'T KNOW.
AND IF THEY LAUNCH THE SHIP, WE'LL BE *HELPLESS* TO STOP THEM

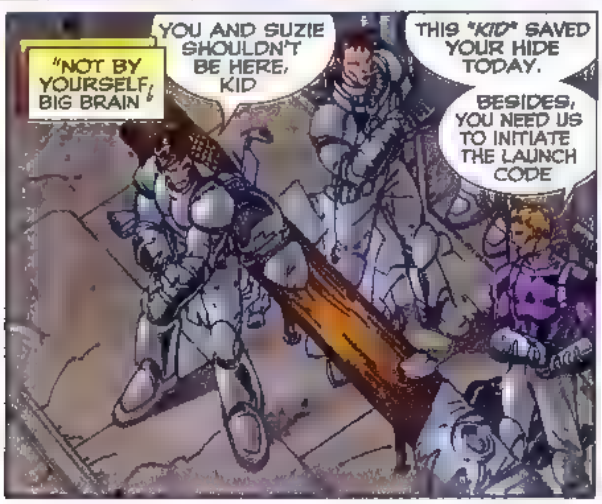
DON'T BET ON IT

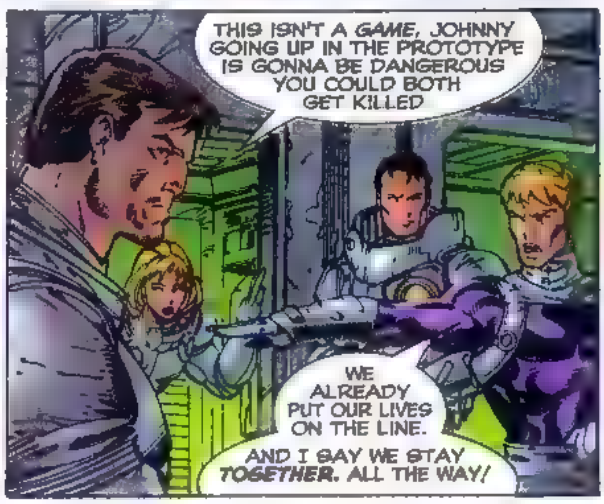
"I GOT A FEELING THAT LUCK JUST MAY BE A LADY TONIGHT."
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOME-THING!
JOHNNY, DON'T BE STUPID.
THESE MEN ARE TRAINED KILLERS.
QUIET/ KEEP WALKING.
YOU KNOW WHAT WE NEED?
A LITTLE DIVERSION
KIK
HONK HONK HONK HONK HONK HONK
CA-CAN'T SEE!
WHACK
LIGHTS OUT, BUDDY!
NOW'S OUR CHANCE, SUE!
JUST STAY COOL AND I'LL --
CONTROL! WE HAVE A
WHOA!
KLANG
-- BE ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF!


IT'S ABOUT TIME THOSE KICK BOXING MOVES YOU TAUGHT ME FINALLY PAID OFF!
KRAKK
HUNGH!
NOT BAD, SIS!
WITH THAT KIND OF KICK, YOU COULD'VE BEEN A ROCKETTE.
THOSE OUTFITS DO NOTHING FOR ME.
BESIDES, I MAKE BETTER MONEY.
HELP!
TERRORISTS ON THE BASE!
HUH?! I DIDN'T HEAR ANY --
HOLD IT! YOU'RE THE STORMS!
WHUMMPH
MMMPPH!
WAY TO GO, KID! I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE!
NO!
HE'S MINE!
THOK
THIS IS FOR ISAAC!

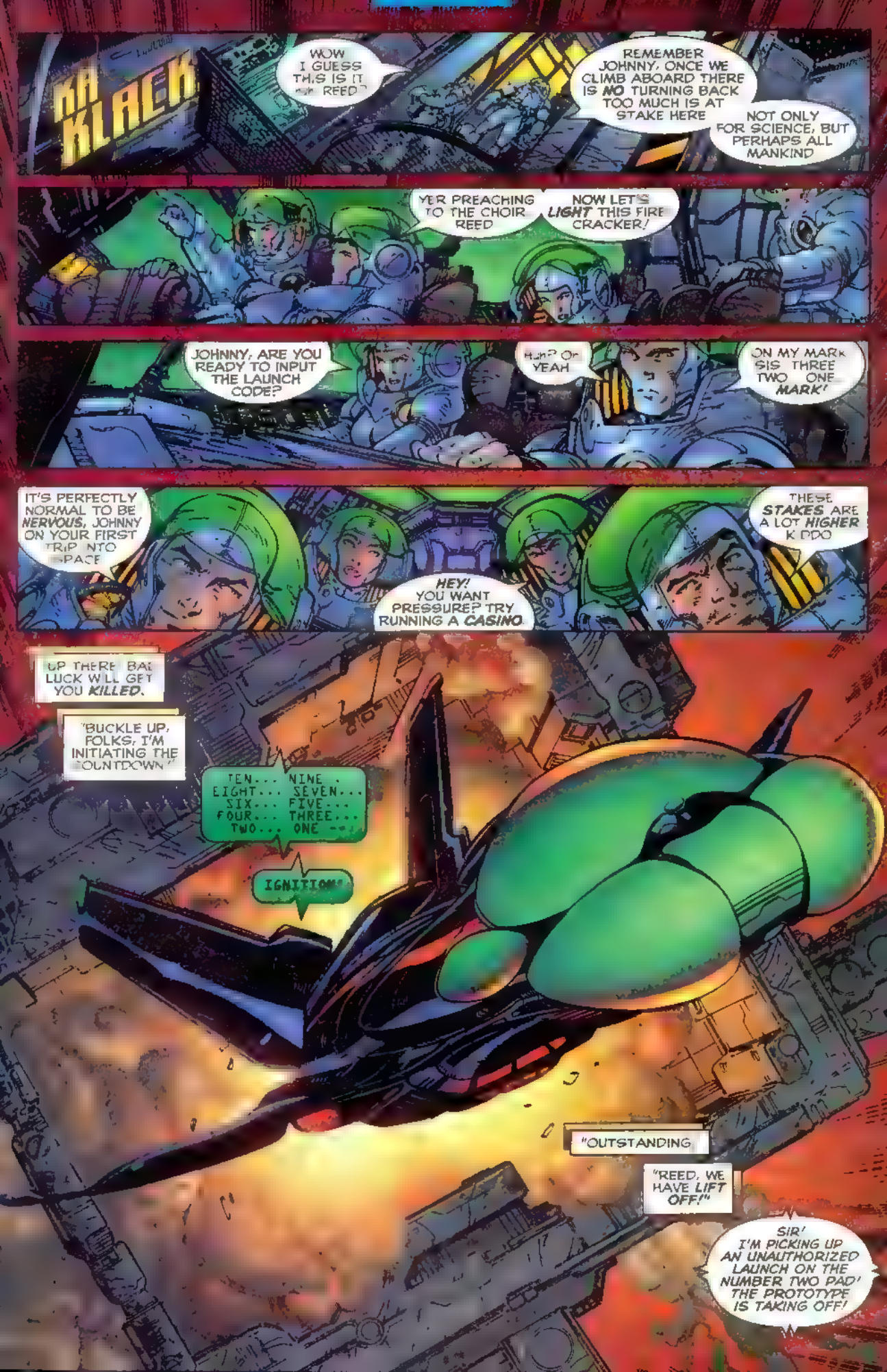

SWEETHEART! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I COULDN'T JUST LEAVE YOU, REED
C'MON! TIME TO SPLIT!
Uh, ANY TIME YOU'RE READY, FOLKS!
ALL RIGHT, SO WHAT NOW?
I HAVE TO STOP WINGFOOT AND HIS PLANS FOR THE EXCELSIOR

ARODGARODGARODGARODGAARODGARO

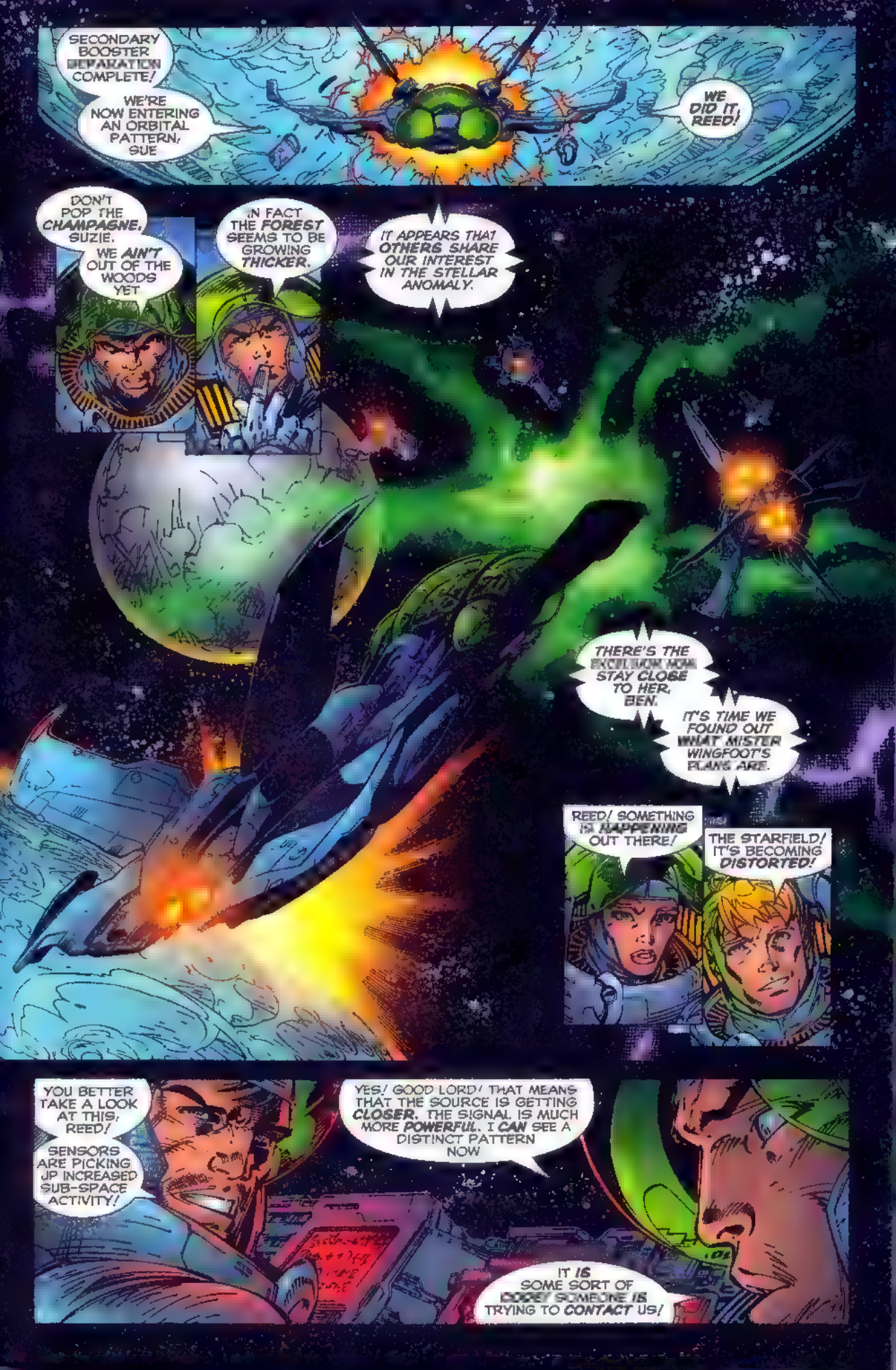

"NOT BY YOURSELF, BIG BRAIN"
YOU AND SUZIE SHOULDN'T BE HERE, KID
THIS "KID" SAVED YOUR HIDE TODAY.
BESIDES, YOU NEED US TO INITIATE THE LAUNCH CODE

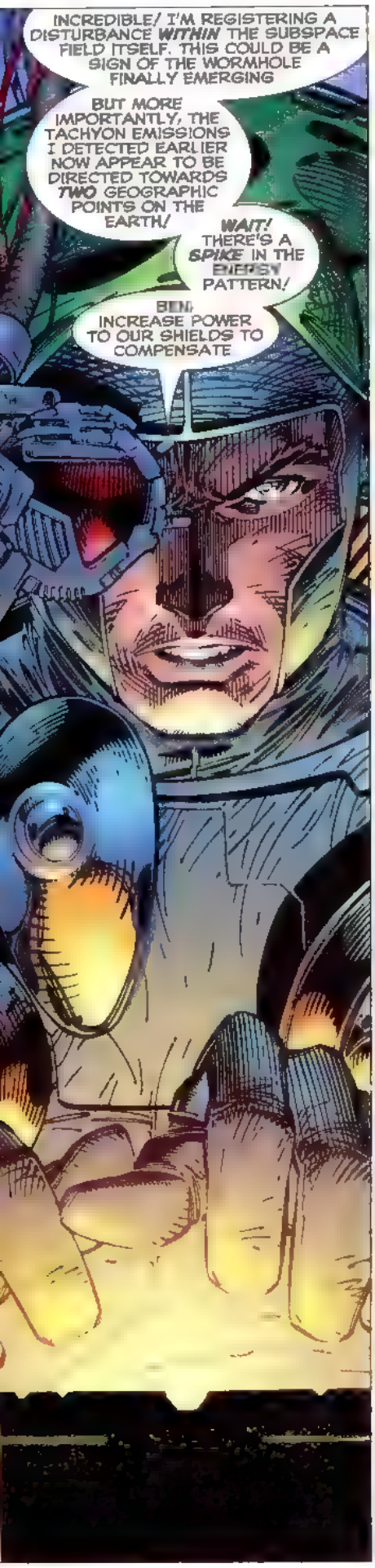

THIS ISN'T A GAME, JOHNNY GOING UP IN THE PROTOTYPE IS GONNA BE DANGEROUS YOU COULD BOTH GET KILLED
WE ALREADY PUT OUR LIVES ON THE LINE.
AND I SAY WE STAY TOGETHER. ALL THE WAY!

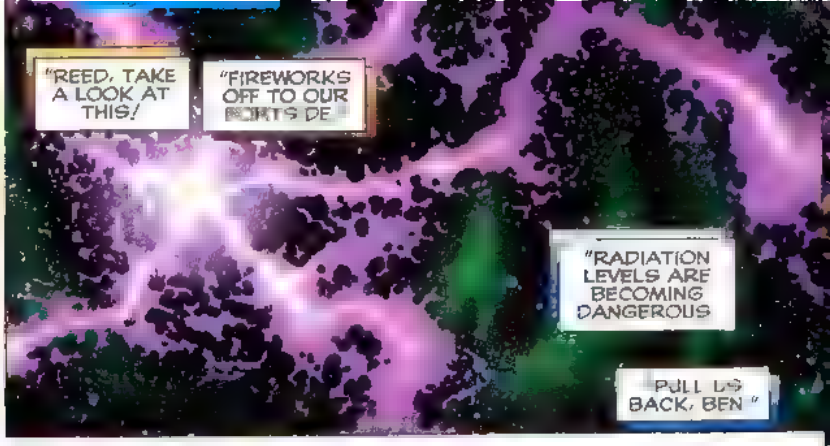
I'M WITH YOU, JOHNNY. REED?
AFTER ALL YOU'VE DONE SUE, HOW CAN I REFUSE YOU?
BEN?
LOOKS LIKE I'VE GOT NO CHOICE.
I'M IN.
RRMMBBLLEE
WHAT'S THAT NOISE?
IT'S GOTTA BE THE EXCELSIOR TAKING OFF!
WHOOSH!
THERE SHE GOES! LOOKS LIKE A PERFECT LAUNCH.
THEN STOP YER GAWKIN'! WE'RE RUNNIN' OUT OF TIME IF WE'RE GONNA MAKE IT INTO THE SAME LAUNCH WINDOW!
"BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE, KID, THIS AIN'T GONNA BE A CAKE WALK ESPECIALLY IF WE END UP BUTTIN' HEADS WITH THOSE S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENTS!
THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN US UP THERE, SUE
WE WERE THE ONES WHO WORKED SO HARD TO MAKE THIS DREAM A REALITY
BUT NOW, SHE'S... GONE.
IT ONLY PROVES THAT YOUR WORK WAS A SUCCESS, REED.
"THE PROTOTYPE'LL GET US INTO SPACE, BUT SHE DOESN'T HAVE THE FUEL CAPACITY OR THE REINFORCED SHIELDING OF THE EXCELSIOR.
"THERE'S NO GUARANTEE THAT ANY OF US WILL MAKE IT BACK."
BUT NOW, THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO STOP CONTACT ONE BEFORE WINGFOOT CAN CARRY OUT HIS PLAN
ENOUGH OF THE WISHFUL THINKIN', PEOPLE. THE PROTOTYPE'S OUR *ONLY* TICKET OUTTA HERE.
SO LET'S GET MOVIN'!

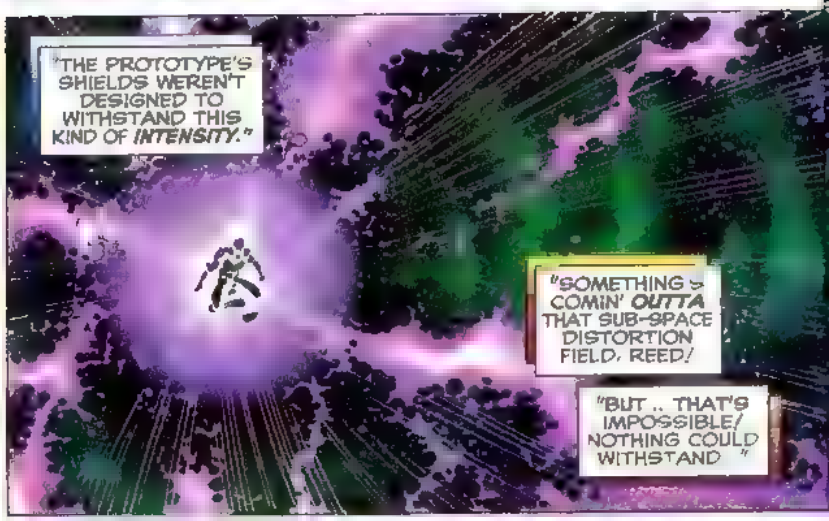

DA KLACK
WOW I GUESS THIS IS IT MR REED
REMEMBER JOHNNY, ONCE WE CLIMB ABOARD THERE IS NO TURNING BACK TOO MUCH IS AT STAKE HERE
NOT ONLY FOR SCIENCE, BUT PERHAPS ALL MANKIND
YER PREACHING TO THE CHOIR REED
NOW LETS LIGHT THIS FIRE CRACKER!
JOHNNY, ARE YOU READY TO INPUT THE LAUNCH CODE?
HUH? OH YEAH
ON MY MARK SIS THREE TWO ONE MARK!
IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL TO BE NERVOUS, JOHNNY ON YOUR FIRST TRIP INTO SPACE
HEY! YOU WANT PRESSURE? TRY RUNNING A CASINO
THESE STAKES ARE A LOT HIGHER K DDO
UP THERE BAD LUCK WILL GET YOU KILLED.
"BUCKLE UP, FOLKS, I'M INITIATING THE COUNTDOWN"
TEN... NINE... EIGHT... SEVEN... SIX... FIVE... FOUR... THREE... TWO... ONE...
IGNITION!
"OUTSTANDING
"REED, WE HAVE LIFT OFF!"
SIR! I'M PICKING UP AN UNAUTHORIZED LAUNCH ON THE NUMBER TWO PAD! THE PROTOTYPE IS TAKING OFF!

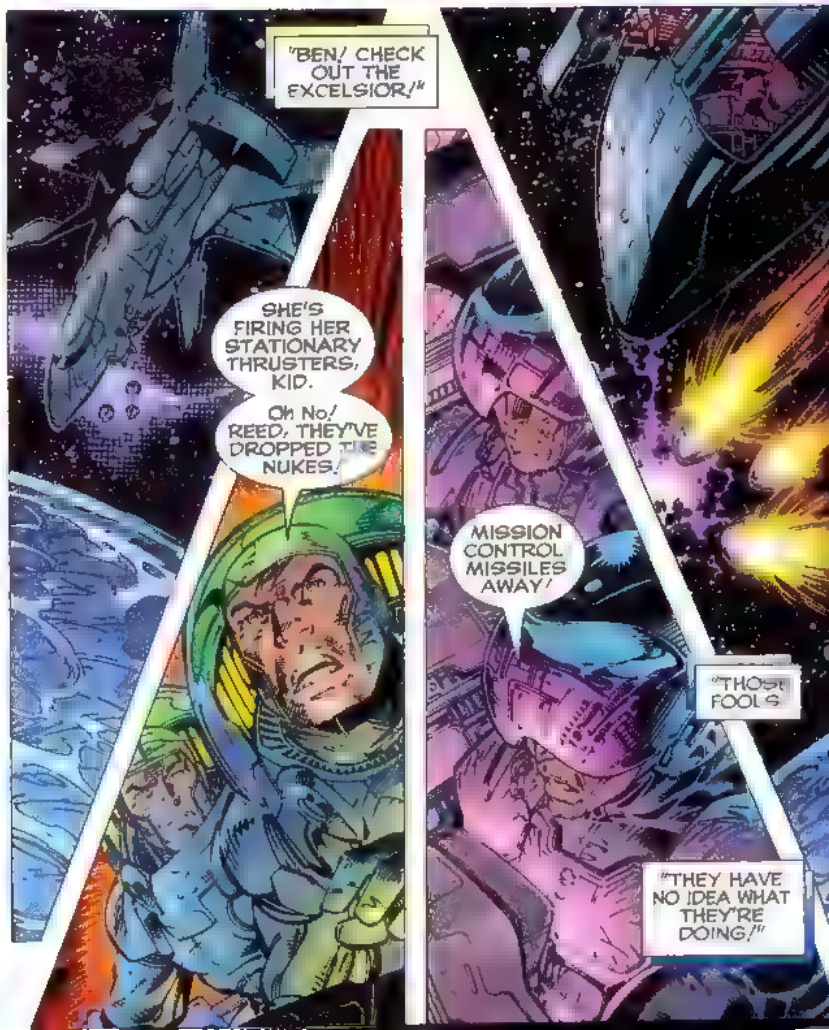
SIR! THE PRISONERS ARE REPORTED MISSING! AND THE GUARDS HAVE BEEN FOUND UNCONSCIOUS!
THAT MEANS MAJOR GRIMM AND DR. RICHARDS ARE ABOARD THAT SHIP!
CAN YOU ABORT THEIR LAUNCH?
NEGATIVE, SIR.
THE ONBOARD LAUNCH CODE OVERRIDES ANY OF OUR COUNTER-MEASURES.
BEN, WE HAVE PRIMARY BOOSTER SEPARATION!
KATHOOM
KATHOOM
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN?
IT MEANS THE FUN'S JUST BEGUN, SUZIE!
G-FORCES -- INCREASING-- AS WE -- ACCELERATE!
EN -- ENJOY THE RIDE!
WHROOM
APP -- APPROACHING -- ESCAPE -- VELOCITY!


SECONDARY BOOSTER SEPARATION COMPLETE!
WE'RE NOW ENTERING AN ORBITAL PATTERN, SUE
WE DID IT, REED!
DON'T POP THE CHAMPAGNE, SUZIE. WE AIN'T OUT OF THE WOODS YET
IN FACT THE FOREST SEEMS TO BE GROWING THICKER.
IT APPEARS THAT OTHERS SHARE OUR INTEREST IN THE STELLAR ANOMALY.
THERE'S THE EXCELSIOR NOW. STAY CLOSE TO HER, BEN.
IT'S TIME WE FOUND OUT WHAT MISTER WINGFOOT'S PLANS ARE.
REED! SOMETHING IS HAPPENING OUT THERE!
THE STARFIELD! IT'S BECOMING DISTORTED!
YOU BETTER TAKE A LOOK AT THIS, REED! SENSORS ARE PICKING UP INCREASED SUB-SPACE ACTIVITY!
YES! GOOD LORD! THAT MEANS THAT THE SOURCE IS GETTING CLOSER. THE SIGNAL IS MUCH MORE POWERFUL. I CAN SEE A DISTINCT PATTERN NOW
IT IS SOME SORT OF CODE! SOMEONE IS TRYING TO CONTACT US!


INCREDIBLE/ I'M REGISTERING A DISTURBANCE *WITHIN* THE SUBSPACE FIELD ITSELF. THIS COULD BE A SIGN OF THE WORMHOLE FINALLY EMERGING
BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE TACHYON EMISSIONS I DETECTED EARLIER NOW APPEAR TO BE DIRECTED TOWARDS *TWO* GEOGRAPHIC POINTS ON THE EARTH/
WAIT! THERE'S A *SPIKE* IN THE ENERGY PATTERN/
BEN, INCREASE POWER TO OUR SHIELDS TO COMPENSATE


"REED, TAKE A LOOK AT THIS/
"FIREWORKS OFF TO OUR PORTS DE
"RADIATION LEVELS ARE BECOMING DANGEROUS
PULL US BACK, BEN"


"THE PROTOTYPE'S SHIELDS WEREN'T DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND THIS KIND OF *INTENSITY.*"
"SOMETHING'S COMIN' *OUTTA* THAT SUB-SPACE DISTORTION FIELD, REED/
"BUT .. THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE/ NOTHING COULD WITHSTAND"


"BEN/ CHECK OUT THE EXCELSIOR/"
SHE'S FIRING HER STATIONARY THRUSTERS, KID.
Oh No/ REED, THEY'VE DROPPED THE NUKES/
MISSION CONTROL MISSILES AWAY/
"THOSE FOOLS
"THEY HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEY'RE DOING/"

"THE HECK WITH THEM!
"WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THOSE MISSILES EXPLO --"
"GOOD LORD! RADIATION READINGS HAVE GONE OFF THE SCALE!
"OUR SHIELDS WON'T HOLD! BEN, YOU'VE GOT TO GET US BACK TO EARTH!
WARNING! WARNING! SECONDARY HULL HAS BEEN RUPTURED! COOLANT SYSTEM COMPROMISED!
WHA -- WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
WE'RE IN A WORLD OF TROUBLE!
SHIP'S BREAKING APART!
I'M SHUTTING DOWN THE GAMMA CORE!
THAT MEANS WE'LL LOSE ALL POWER TO THE SHIELDS!
WE WON'T BE ABLE TO BLOCK OUT ANY OF THE RADIATION FROM THE STELLAR ANOMALY!
AGGH!
SOMEBODY DO SOME-THING!
CAN'T -- STAND -- THE PAIN!
EVERY-BODY! ABANDON SHIP!

"BEFORE IT'S TOO LA--"
KABOOM!
ZZZZRRRRRAAAAPP
THE SHIP'S INFRASTRUCTURE IS BUCKLING! RADIATION IS FLOODING INTO THE MAIN COMPARTMENT!
IT CAN'T END LIKE THIS! WE WERE SO CLOSE!
ZZZZRRRRRAAAAPP
WE'RE NOT FINISHED YET, REED!
EVERYONE GET TO THE ESCAPE PODS!
ZZZZRRRRRAAAAPP
RIGHT BEHIND YOU -- Huh?
MY SPACESUIT! IT'S DISINTE-GRATING!
ZZZZRRRRRAAAAPP
GOT -- TO STABILIZE -- THE SHIP!
GIVE THE OTHERS -- A CHANCE -- TO ESCAPE!

"LOSING -- NAVIGATION!
"SHIP -- GOING -- DOWN!
WHERRSH
"EXCEPT THIS TIME --
"-- IT'S NOT --
"-- A DREAM!"
STATUS REPORT!
CONTACT ONE IS RETURNING TO BASE AND SHOULD ARRIVE WITHIN THE HOUR.
AND THE PROTO-TYPE?
"ACCORDING TO OUR SENSORS, THE SHIP IS DISINTEGRATING UPON RE-ENTRY INTO EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE!"
PHOOM
PHOOM
PHOOM
PHOOM
"EXCELLENT! ESTIMATED POINT OF IMPACT?"
"THE CARIBBEAN SEA."
KABOOM!

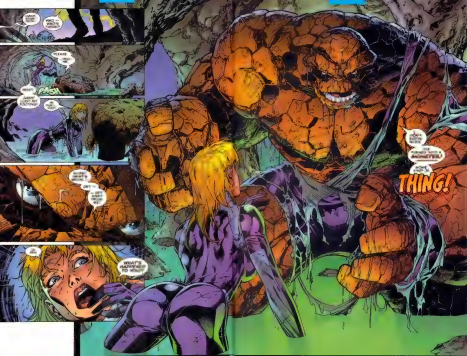
SOMEWHERE IN THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE...
OOH!
OOH?
VREEEEEE
BOOM
SCREECH!
I — I'M BURNING UP!
AAAGGH!
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?
WHROOSH

I'M LIT UP LIKE SOME KIND OF HUMAN TORCH! GOT TO PUT OUT THE FLAMES!
WAIT! THERE'S WATER BELOW ME!
JUST HAVE TO REACH IT!
KERPLASH
HOLD IT! WAS I REALLY FLYING?!
NO TIME TO THINK ABOUT THAT RIGHT NOW! MY LUNGS FEEL LIKE THEY'RE ABOUT TO BURST!
GOT TO GET BACK TO THE SURFACE BEFORE I DROWN!
THIS -- THIS IS ALL WRONG! WHAT'D I EVER DO TO DESERVE ..
SNAP OUT OF IT, MAN!
JUST DEAL WITH IT!
THE OTHERS COULD BE IN TROUBLE, TOO --
HUH?
WHAT'S THIS?
FEELS LIKE FLESH. WARM TO THE TOUCH.
BUT WHAT'S IT CONNECTED TO?

OMIGOD! IT'S A HAND!
THIS SOME KIND OF BIZARRE MAGIC TRICK?
HOLD IT, THERE'S THE REST OF THE BODY!
REED?! TAKE IT EASY! I'VE GOT YOU NOW!
WHAT THE HECK HAPPENED TO US UP THERE?
COUGH COUGH
THE STELLAR ANOMALY EMITTED A POWERFUL ENERGY PULSE WHEN IT WAS ATTACKED.
COUGH!
COUGH!
AFTER OUR SHIELDS FAILED, WE WERE EXPOSED TO HIGH LEVELS OF COSMIC RADIATION.
COUGH COUGH
RIGHT NOW, THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT IT MAY HAVE DONE TO US OR HOW LONG WE MAY HAVE TO LIVE.
WELL, TAKE A LOOK AT THIS, REED.
I'VE BECOME A HUMAN ZIPPO.
WHILE I POSSESS THE ABILITY TO STRETCH MY BODY TO INCREDIBLE LENGTHS,
YOU'RE NOT STUCK LIKE THAT... ARE YOU?
NO, IT APPEARS THAT I CAN EQUALLY CONTRACT MY BODY PARTS AT WILL.
SOMEHOW THE RADIATION HAS MUTATED OUR VERY BIO-MOLECULAR STRUCTURE AND THEREBY IMBUED US WITH FANTASTIC POWERS
BUT I'LL HAVE A BETTER IDEA OF WHAT HAPPENED AFTER I ANALYZE THE DATA FROM THE PROTO-TYPE'S BLACK BOX.
THIS LITTLE MEMORY CHIP WILL TELL ME WHAT I NEED TO KNOW
BUT FOR NOW, WE'D BETTER FIND SUE AND BEN AND MAKE SURE THEY'RE BOTH ALL RIGHT.
LOOK, TWO SMOKE PLUMES/ THEY MUST'VE LANDED FURTHER INLAND/
YOU KNOW, REED, THIS IS ALL JUST SO UNREAL!

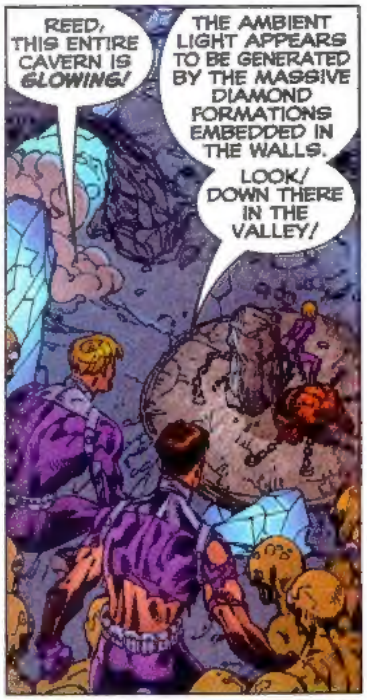
"BEN'S GONNA FREAK WHEN HE GETS A LOAD OF THIS!"
JUST MY LUCK
SEVENTY FIVE PERCENT OF THE PLANET'S COVERED WITH WATER BUT I STILL MANAGE TO SLAM INTO THE SIDE OF A MOUNTAIN!
LOOKS WORSE THAN MY CRASH IN IRAQ, BUT AT LEAST I'M--
AARGH! HEAD POUNDING! PAIN -- TOO -- INTENSE!
HUH?!
KRRKK
NO! THIS -- THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING!
MY HANDS -- TURNING INTO -- ROCK!
CAN'T -- FEEL -- ANYTHING!
KRRRKLE
UUNGH! HAR -- HARD -- TO BREATHE!
CAN'T -- STAND -- THE PAIN!
BODY -- FEELS -- LIKE IT'S -- BEING TORN -- APART!
AARRGH!

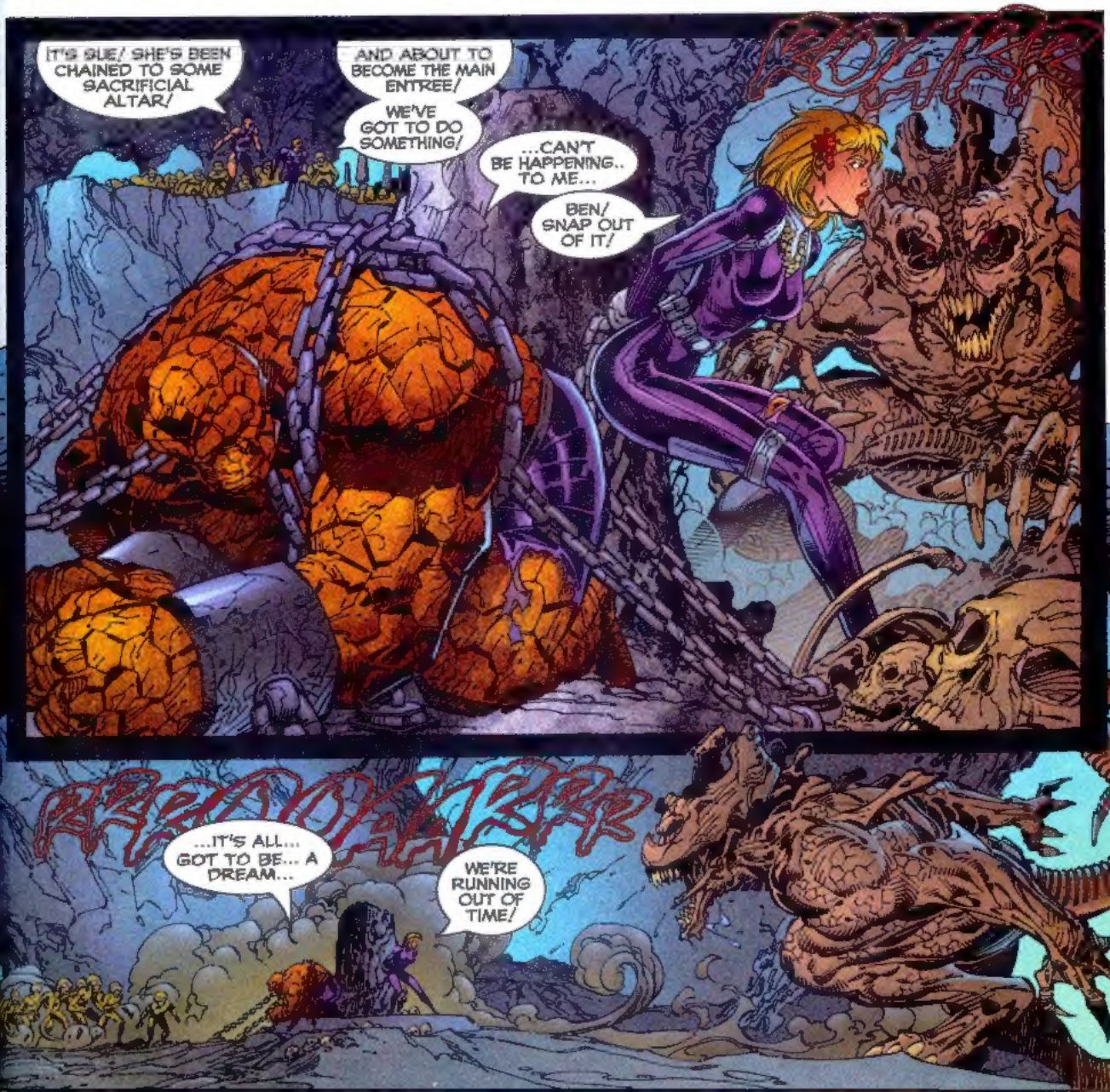
BEN! IS THAT YOU? I THOUGHT I HEARD YOUR VOICE
IT'S ONE OF THE ESCAPE PODS BUT I DON'T SEE ANYONE AROUND
BEEP BEEP
WHAT'S THAT NOISE?
OH NO! IT'S THE QUANTUM DRIVE!
IT MUST'VE BEEN SHIELDED BY THE ESCAPE POD DURING RE-ENTRY!
BUT THE CORE'S CONTAINMENT SHELL HAS BEEN DAMAGED BY THE IMPACT
BEEP BEEP BEEP
RADIATION LEVELS
BEEPBEEPBEE
THE REACTOR'S BECOME UNSTABLE!
IF IT REACHES CRITICAL MASS AND EXPLODES, THE ENTIRE ISLAND COULD BE COMPLETELY DESTROYED!
I'VE GOT TO FIND THE OTHERS BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!


THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?
COME ON...
AAAH
NO! I CAN'T LOSE HIM!
NOT AGAIN!
NOT AGAIN!
NOT AGAIN

WAIT! THERE'S SOMETHING BEHIND YOU!
LOOK OUT!
WHAT THE --?!
RROOAARR!!!
SLASH
AAIEEEE!
CRASH
UUNNGH!
WHUMP
REED! THAT SOUNDED LIKE SUE!
THEN WE HAVEN'T A MOMENT TO LOSE!
IT CAME FROM THIS DIRECTION--
WHOA! THE GROUND'S GIVING WAY!
WE'VE FALLEN INTO SOME SORT OF TUNNEL!
UH-OH. . CAN THINGS GET ANY WORSE?
SO, DO WE FIGHT OUR WAY OUT?
NO, JOHNNY
RIGHT NOW, WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEIR INTENTIONS ARE
THEY SEEM HARMLESS ENOUGH
WHERE DO YOU THINK THEY'RE TAKING US?
TO THEIR LEADER, I'D GUESS

LOOK/ THEY MUST USE THOSE FUNKY ROAD SIGNS TO GET AROUND THESE CAVES.
INCREDIBLE/ THOSE INSCRIPTIONS RESEMBLE THE SIGNALS WE INTERCEPTED FROM THE WORMHOLE/
OF COURSE/ THIS ISLAND MUST BE ONE OF THE TWO POINTS ON EARTH SOMEHOW LINKED TO THE ANOMALY.


REED, THIS ENTIRE CAVERN IS GLOWING/
THE AMBIENT LIGHT APPEARS TO BE GENERATED BY THE MASSIVE DIAMOND FORMATIONS EMBEDDED IN THE WALLS.
LOOK/ DOWN THERE IN THE VALLEY/

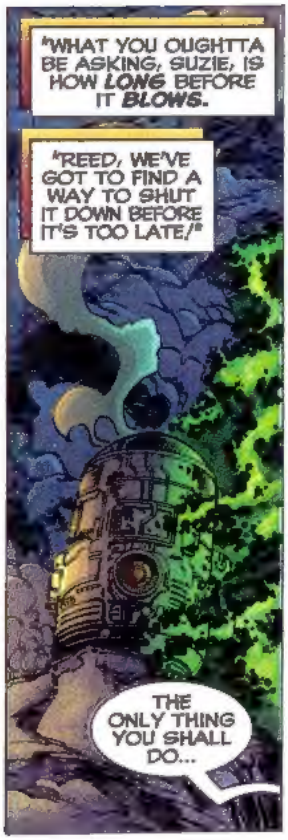

IT'S SUE/ SHE'S BEEN CHAINED TO SOME SACRIFICIAL ALTAR/
AND ABOUT TO BECOME THE MAIN ENTREE/
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING/
...CAN'T BE HAPPENING.. TO ME...
BEN/ SNAP OUT OF IT/
ROAR
...IT'S ALL... GOT TO BE... A DREAM...
WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME/

Oh, GOD!
NO!
RRRARR!
SUZIE?! WHERE'D YA' GO!?
THE MONSTER ATE HER!
YOU JUST MADE THE LAST MISTAKE OF YOUR UGLY LIFE!
WHAM
BARGH!
'CAUSE NOW --
IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!
THWAM

BEN/ IT'S OKAY. I'M ALL RIGHT/
SUZIE/ YOU'RE STILL ALIVE?
I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE WHAT HAPPENED. ONE SECOND I WAS THERE --
-- AND THEN SUDDENLY I BECAME... INVISIBLE/

CHILL OUT, FOLKS/ THE CAVALRY'S JUST ARRIVED/
JOHNNY/ REED/
BEN? IS THAT YOU? WHAT HAP--

COULD WE TALK ABOUT THIS LATER, GUYS?/ THE MONSTER'S BACK/
AND HE AIN'T OUR ONLY PROBLEM, KID.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, BEN?
HE'S RIGHT/ LOOK OVER THERE/
IT'S THE QUANTUM DRIVE/ BUT HOW DID IT GET DOWN HERE?


"WHAT YOU OUGHTTA BE ASKING, SUZIE, IS HOW LONG BEFORE IT BLOWS.
"REED, WE'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO SHUT IT DOWN BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE/"
THE ONLY THING YOU SHALL DO...

...IS PERISH AT THE HANDS OF MY MINIONS/
A PROPER FATE FOR THOSE WHO DARE TO TRESPASS UPON MY ISLAND/

SAW THE MOLEMAN!
TO BE CONTINUED